

Gregory, Ruth W. and Stoffel, Lester L. **Public Libraries in Cooperative Systems: Administrative Patterns for Service.** Chicago: American Library Association, 1971. 315p. \$9.95.

This mistitled volume, widely anticipated in the public library world, is a distinct disappointment—mainly because it says very little about systems, and what it does say consists of reassuring generalizations and platitudes designed to prove to local libraries that they need have no fear of cooperative systems and that there are naught but benefits to be derived from membership.

Whole chapters belong in a basic book of public library administration. And often where the role of the system could be useful, it is overlooked or minimized. For example, in the chapter on capital improvements the system consulting staff and system knowledge are entirely overlooked. System staff can assist in selecting the right architect, help to select the best site, and so on. Nothing of the sort is mentioned. The authors and ALA are capitalizing on interest in a popular subject without really writing about it. The section on supportive system services should have occupied half the book instead of the mere nineteen pages devoted to it.

Comments like "It [the cooperative library system] presents absolutely no threat to the library's local prestige . . ." represent ideas not shared by a large number of member libraries throughout the nation. In light of New York State's massive direct-access problems, such as those which prompted the recent pullout of the Finkelshtein Memorial Library (Spring Valley, New York) from the Ramapo-Catskill Library System, it is idiotic to use a 1963 comment by Jean L. Connor to prove that "an anticipation of serious drains on any member library . . . is not justified by experience records." That's just not true. And many libraries would disagree with the view that "the system is the voice of the member units in library and related planning and research councils."

Essential cooperation with nearby large municipal libraries (Chicago, New York, etc.) is overlooked. While the importance of communication is stressed, no mention

is made of the enormous problem of informing member library staffs, and not just the directors.

In the appendixes, the authors rely heavily on materials of the Suburban Library System. While this surely was quick and easy and may be fine for Stoffel's ego, since he is director of that system, it unfairly overlooks the many superior documents developed by other systems. The model by-laws, for example, do not even suggest that the director should serve as secretary to the board, a common and desirable practice.

The authors are working on a new manuscript which will consider the problems of cooperative library systems. Maybe that will result in the book we've all been waiting for.—*Guenter A. Jansen, Director, Suffolk Cooperative Library System.*

Michael H. Harris. **Reader in American Library History.** Washington, D.C.: NCR Microcard Editions, 1971. 242p.

This volume is a compilation of previously-published materials concentrating upon selected aspects of American library history. The fifth volume in a growing series, it includes writings by such authors as David Mearns, Kenneth Brough, and Howard Clayton on the historic development of American libraries and librarianship. Three of the selections are admirably suited as study-pieces in American intellectual history courses: "Democratic Strivings" by Sidney Ditzion; "Causal Factors . . ." by Jesse H. Shera; and ". . . Rise of Research and Research Libraries, 1850-1900" by Samuel Rothstein. Harris's credentials for this undertaking include his *Guide to Research in American Library History* (Scarecrow, 1968) and numerous bibliographic contributions to *The Journal of Library History*.

The book excerpts and journal articles number twenty-four, and each selection is prefaced with a brief explanatory statement. The text is printed on "raggy" paper (National Cash Register Company maintains its own paper mill) with double-column paging for the body of each selection. The selections are arranged into six topic headings ranging from colonial library history through Melvil Dewey and ALA to twentieth century specialization (library